

PRORAGIS

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Glossary

Q: What is PRORAGIS?

A: PRORAGIS is the name of an on-line database that collects, compiles and reports on park and recreation department operating and geographic information.

Q: What is the meaning of the term PRORAGIS?

A: PRORAGIS is an acronym that is comprised of the words – **P**ark and **R**ecreation **O**perating **R**atio **A**nd **G**eographic **I**nformation **S**ystem

Q: Why is PRORAGIS being developed by NRPA?

A: Beginning in 2008 the APRS branch of NRPA sought a means of updating the facility and area standards that had become guidelines by the 1980's. A project was funded and launched by APRS/NRPA to standardize the Park, Trails and Facility terminology for Geographic Information Systems (GIS). This project was completed in April of 2010.

In the Spring of 2009 NRPA funded and conducted an Operating Ratio Internet Survey to get a database that answers basic operation and management questions and could be compared with peers through the use of ratios as a performance measure, e.g., acres per 1,000 residents and similar.

In the spring of 2010 NRPA and APRS determined that developing an online profile that was updateable, real-time and available for members on a 24/7/365 basis was preferable to an annual survey with reports that could age. It was also determined that benefit could be found by using the new GIS Model as part of the on-line profile. The APRS was also involved in the initial funding of this initiative.

Q: What value does PRORAGIS have for my department or City?

A: As mentioned in the previous question, PRORAGIS is a replacement for the NRPA standards that have guided land acquisition and development for the past 45 years. This data is much more accurate because you can compare standards with departments in your state or region and the data that is reported comprises actual numbers rather than a more generic national average. However PRORAGIS is multi-dimensional. It also provides assistance with the following typical park and recreation functions:

- Benchmark survey of peers;
- Master planning of parks;
- Comprehensive jurisdiction planning;
- Strategic planning;
- Business and revenue-generation planning;
- Marketing of facilities, programs and tourist attractions; and
- Justification and defense of departmental budgets.

Q: How much does it cost to create a PRORAGIS profile?

A: There is no cost to register and create a profile. If you are a NRPA member you can access the reports for free. If you do not wish to be a member of NRPA you can purchase report access for \$200 annually.

Q: Do I have to be a Member of NRPA in order to participate?

A: No, any entity that provides park and recreation services can register and create a PRORAGIS profile. The value of the data will be the highest for those providers that have the most peers registering and creating profiles. For example, a park and recreation department from Australia will find the database of greater value if there are several Australian departments with profiles; the same would be true for park and recreation departments operating on Native American reservations or military installations.

Q: Do I need to complete the entire profile in order to participate?

A: The more information you can provide the more valuable your data will be to yourself or your peers. While we would like to receive as much information about your department as possible, we understand that not all of the information is readily available. NRPA hopes that information requested but not available will be tracked by the departments in ensuing years so eventually the profile will be completed. In other cases we recognize that your department operations are not structured to collect the data we are seeking.

Admittedly, submitting the information will be most difficult in the first year. However, in following years, agencies have the option to “copy” the previous year’s data over to the new year’s survey and make adjustments only where necessary.

Q: When is the best time to complete the profile for my department?

There are two answers to this question.

A.1: For completing budget data projected for the coming year, it is best to load the data once the budget plan is finalized. Ideally the data would be available by the start of your fiscal year but if it is a busy time it may take you into the next year to complete.

A.2: It is best to complete the prior-year-actual database within the two months following the end of your Fiscal Year. Fiscal Years end for departments on varying schedules. Most departments have a fiscal year that runs from:

- January 1 to December 31
- May 1 to April 30
- July 1 to June 30 or
- October 1 to September 30

Using the two-month rule allows a department to finalize annual reports and determine prior-year-actual data. This database will be the most accurate.

Q: The PRORAGIS profile asks for a lot of data and would appear to take a lot of time to complete. Do you have recommendations for the most efficient way for my department to complete our profile?

A. As you are well aware, park and recreation departments, their communities and their policies, operations, programs and management are often unique. To be useful PRORAGIS needs to

gather data that is relevant to that uniqueness but allows for peer comparison. The profile is long enough to address those differences.

Completing the Profile:

1. On the Profile Management Home page of PRORAGIS (<https://www.iisecure.com/NRPA/PRORAGIS/ProfileHome.asp>) in the lower right-hand corner is a button that will allow you to download a PDF of the operating ratio questions.
2. Download the questions for each of the seven tabs and distribute them in hard copy to the appropriate staff, i.e., Budget/Funding to your Finance Office; Personnel to Human Resources, Park lands to a planner or park maintenance Superintendent, etc.

Note: Some of these functions may not be within your department.

3. Once you have answered questions for both the Prior Fiscal Year and the Budget Fiscal Year, you are ready to complete your profile for the operating ratio tabs.
4. If you have staff available let them enter the data into the profile. If no staff are available check with a local university, community college, high school or volunteer organizations and see if they can provide someone with the ability to enter the data into the computer. Ideally you could find a park and recreation student who could benefit from the experience. Once the data is entered you will need only update future years.

Note: The process for entering Geographic Information System data is provided in the GIS tab.

Q: Do I have to complete my entire profile in one sitting?

A: You may complete your entire profile over multiple sessions. As the database is available 24/7/365 days a year, you may return at any time to modify/add data to your profile. As you are updating any page simply click the "Save This Section" button to save your data to the database. Also, if you'd prefer to collect the data offline you can download PDF documents of the entire profile or individual sections to print off so you can complete them offline and then enter the data into PRORAGIS once you have the information.

Q: How does NRPA determine when a profile is "complete"?

A: The person filling out the profile determines when each section is complete, and clicks the box at the bottom of the page. NRPA may challenge that during validation review but that will be directly with the profile manager.

Q: Can you edit data after you check the "complete" box?

A: Yes. Just go in and make changes then click the Save button at the bottom of the page when finished.

Q: Can more than one person modify the profile for the agency?

A: You may grant additional users access to your PRORAGIS account by:

- Going to the "Profile Management Home" tab.

- Scroll down and click on the “Add Users” button.
- This will take you to a page that allows you to identify up to three users access to the PRORAGIS account.
- The users can then login to the PRORAGIS account by going to the following link and simply entering the PRORAGIS ID and their email address:
<https://www.iisecure.com/NRPA/PRORAGIS/Login.asp>
- To remove their access to the PRORAGIS account simply click on the “Add Users” button again and clear their email address from the list of alternate users.

Q: What should we do if our department is recreation-specific and has no jurisdiction over lands?

A: You have the option of simply leave the land-related questions blank.

We have also received a question related to a community where the parks department functions separately from the recreation department. Since they may only have information for the recreation department how do they address this in PRORAGIS? If this is the case, it will be to their benefit for reporting and analysis if they can combine information from the two departments into one PRORAGIS account. This assumes that both departments share the same lands and facilities as a base for programs and services. If in fact the two departments have separate sites and functions, then they should each register and complete a profile. If both agencies are using the same profile, they should provide data for all of the lands, facilities, programs, and personnel over which they have combined budget responsibility.

If, however, the two agencies are not completing a shared profile, then neither department should include data about the other that would result in duplication or skewing of responses.

Q: Is there any way to handle seasonal population? For some communities that have a large influx of summer residents, their budget is based on that population.

A: Use the population number that the budget is based on (whether resident or seasonal). If you'd like, you can also indicate the resident vs. seasonal population in the comments at the bottom of the page, and make a note of which you entered above.

Q: How do we address overlap when departmental responsibilities are fluid? In some circumstances the responsibilities of the Park and Recreation, Public Works, Administration, Finance, or Engineering department may have shared budgets.

A: The more information you can contribute, the more useful the database will prove for your agency. NRPA would like to receive all of a locality's relevant data in a single profile. NRPA recognizes that sometimes the snow-plowing or leaf-collecting funding for your staff may be included in another department's budget. If it is possible, please collaborate with all associated departments in order to compile all of the relevant information into a single profile.

Q: Some departments have been waiting for their census data to be released before they complete their profile. Should we wait for census data if it has not yet been released?

A: It is NRPA's expectation that all the information requested by PRORAGIS can be answered by the local Park and Recreation department. None of the questions should require census data for response.

Q: Will our department be asked to reveal employee salary specifics?

A: We do not ask questions specific to particular positions such as, "What is your park director's salary?" Rather, we aggregate such information, asking about the apportioning of salaries and wages to entire department categories. The only partial exception is the question relating to whether or not the board or commission members are paid for their service. This information allows us to respond to a question that frequently arises.

Q: Since PRORAGIS is user-driven, how do I know there is someone on the other end making sure the data is accurate? I don't, for example, want to compare my costs to other agencies that do not make a distinction between maintaining developed and undeveloped land.

A: Since PRORAGIS is user-driven, we are inherently dependent on the persons submitting their data accurately. We are continually striving to make the form as straightforward as possible. Additionally, we provide explanations throughout the form to help agencies complete their profiles in a consistent manner. On the reporting side, PRORAGIS offers side-by-side reporting that allows users to review the data for each agency to which they are comparing themselves. Users therefore have the option of excluding anyone they feel is not an appropriate benchmarking "fit."

Industry Insights, the firm responsible for maintaining the database also periodically reviews all of the data in the system for inconsistencies, irregularities, and errors. When necessary, Industry Insights will reach out to participating agencies for clarification on questionable items.

Q: We already have a GIS department in our county. What will the employee responsible for our existing GIS need to do to map us in PRORAGIS as well? Will it require a lot of that person's time?

A: The amount of time needed will depend on how similarly to the NRPA GIS Model the Jurisdiction's GIS is configured. The format of the GIS Model should be followed exactly with no changes. Most agencies find it relatively easy to cut and paste the data on parks, trails and facilities into the NRPA Model. The import features usually work quite well once the format is set. It is necessary to translate the Agency GIS (pdb) into a file database (fdb). The translator is available for download.

Q: If we already have a GIS system in our jurisdiction, what are the advantages to spending the time entering our mapping data into PRORAGIS?

A: Unless you enter your GIS data into the PRORAGIS profile, you cannot use the GIS reporting format and compare parks, trails and facilities data to other agencies. To replicate the PRORAGIS-GIS reporting you would need to contact all benchmark agencies separately and obtain their GIS copies and develop the reports on your own. There is certainly no guarantee that the terminology would be compatible. PRORAGIS uses standardized

terminology for attributes and values, so if you are not using it there is no guarantee that you are comparing like features.

Specific Issue Questions

Q: Should total acreage include trails?

A: Yes, you should include the Right-Of-Way acreage of the trail that is not on other parklands.

Q: Why isn't there more information concerning sports programs (or other departmental functions) when some departments consider it a huge part of their responsibility and wellbeing?

A: Given the variability of program and operation details it is not feasible to conduct a mass survey of specifics for each agency. PRORAGIS focuses on the key information that enables you to select departments, operations or programs that are similar to yours. If you are seeking more specific information you can contact the similar departments and discuss the details with them. The programs listed in the profile reflect information that relates to questions that have consistently arisen during actual benchmarking projects. For example, Whether or not the department's employees are members of a union makes a significant difference in how workload is carried out, staffing levels and cost. Exactly how union representation impacts the department is left for a discussion between you and the similar department.

Q: What revenue-enhancing features of PRORAGIS are currently in place?

A: An agency may be able to identify program areas that are lacking or program areas that other like-sized agencies offer that they do not. Additionally, a key, revenue-supporting strength of the system is allowing agencies to defend budgets based on local, regional, national, or other custom-filtered benchmarks pulled from the data.

Furthermore, although the demographic feature of the web-based maps is not currently loaded, it should be loaded before January. This feature allows you define the typical trade (user population) area for a recreation/community center and identify the demographic characteristics of the population within the trade area.

This data provides the programmers at the facility with the knowledge of current and potential users and enhances the ability to provide program offerings that may increase revenues. In addition, it enables the center management to contrast the space utilization at the center with the populations that might be able to use the facility at low use times. Increasing the number of users has an exponentially greater effect on the revenues generated than raising entry fees.

Q: What revenue-enhancing features are planned as the system matures?

A: As the system matures, it will offer users the ability to tie in demographic information and operations-related data with the GIS—so as to identify revenue opportunities and underserved areas within jurisdictions. Also in the pipeline are mobile apps such as park locators and park events calendars. These can be used for increasing tourism to facilities and special events.

Q: How much detailed analysis will we be able to do with budget comparisons with other departments?

A: The budget section is organized as a top-down approach with operating expenditure analysis from both a categorical level (Personnel, Operations, Capital, and Other) and a functional level (i.e., Executive, Administrative, Operations, Programs, Maintenance, etc.) You can perform any analysis that draws from these categories.

The intent of the budget data is to provide PRORAGIS with the information it needs to calculate a variety of budget-related metrics. It is also intended to allow the user to quickly judge the similarity between their departments. Further “drilling down” of data depends on your contacting the other benchmark agencies with specific questions relevant to your study. There are so many possible budget variables it would be unfair to ask all profiling agencies to provide that level of detail. We do try to get as much information as we logically will need without overburdening respondents.

Q: How transparent are budget matters such as chargebacks to other departments? We want to be sure we're doing apples-to-apples budget comparisons!

A: We don't specifically ask about chargebacks. We do however ask about various functions and whether the agency/department is responsible or the Jurisdiction/Other department bears responsibility for the function.

The budget items such as chargebacks to other departments fall into the same category as the answer to question 5. If an agency appears to be similar to yours, you can clarify with them whether or not they have chargebacks as part of their accounting system or not. Many agencies do not bother with such accounting practices.

Q: Should we inventory only the lands that are recognized as parks and open spaces? Or should we inventory even tiny parcels of land (e.g., median strips and parking lot areas) for which our agency is responsible?

A: Everything your agency manages or maintains should be included.

The cost of maintaining the small parcels is incredibly expensive compared to their acreage. I [Bill Beckner] once conducted a maintenance analysis of an agency that had 2000 acres being mowed by three equally-sized mowing crews. Two of these crews mowed 1931 acres. The third mowed 69 acres in over 130 park sites. We ask you to indicate the amount of land that your agency manages or maintains so as to allow for a more accurate comparison of how maintenance resources are distributed.

Q: Do state professional associations (i.e. those that have no physical assets, parks, facilities) fill out a profile? Or do they just create one so that they can access the reports?

A: State associations do not need to fill out a profile, but any member can access the reports using their member log-in for NRPA. If you are not a member you can buy a subscription that will grant report access.

Q: Can military and Indian reservations be added into the PRORAGIS system now?

A: There are three groups—state parks, military installations and Native American reservation departments that have some unique issues relating to data that will require either adjustment to our current profile questions or an additional tab. At this time we plan on forming user committees by late February and working through the data needs for each group.

We have described the PRORAGIS profile as Model 1.0. PRORAGIS will continue to evolve in order to become the most useful tool possible for the recreation and parks industry. Any glitches you find or clarifications needed should be submitted to NRPA so that we can address them as we update the profile.

Glossary

- Agency:** An agency is used in PRORAGIS as an interchangeable term with “department.” Thus there might be a reference to a park and recreation agency.
- Department:** Refers to the Park and Recreation Department unless otherwise specified such as Public Works Department.
- Jurisdiction:** Describes the political entity that encompasses the park and recreation department’s funded responsibility. A jurisdiction can be a state, city, town or other municipality; a county, special district or legally recognized entity such as a school or utility district whose political boundaries may not be the same as the municipality.